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ABSTRACT

Individual interviews with 27 tenured faculty members who had coauthored one or more scholarly publications with a spouse or partner were conducted to identify patterns of collaboration associated with knowledge production and publication productivity. The study identified three patterns of collaboration: (1) short term usually a one-time effort for a single project where the partners' research areas temporarily intersected; (2) intermittent collaboration was more than once, but there were gaps of at least five years between collaborations; and (3) long term collaboration was sustained and consistent over 10 or more years. When asked how a partner contributed to research productivity, nearly all respondents indicated the advantage afforded by ease of access to informal feedback about work in progress. Participants who identified their collaborative partnerships as long term were most likely to view these relationships as impacting upon the quality and/or quantity of their publications. The institutional reward structure was often identified as a mitigating factor in suppressing the impact on collaborative productivity. Findings suggest that physical proximity of the collaborating partners results in reinforcement--provided by the access to on-going, informal feedback. (Contains 20 references.) (DB)

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1997 ASHE CONFERENCE RESEARCH PAPER

Knowledge Production, Publication Productivity, and Intimate Academic Partnerships

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Abstract

Individual interviews with 27 faculty members who had co-authored one or more scholarly publications with a spouse or partner were conducted to identify patterns of collaboration described by prolific academics in a number of academic disciplines and to report how these are perceived to be associated with knowledge production and publication productivity. Studying such collaborative relationships explores the extent that different phases of the process of knowledge production are a solitary or interactive process. Findings point to the reinforcement provided by the access to on-going, informal feedback afforded by physical proximity.

Knowledge Production, Publication Productivity, and Intimate Academic Partnerships

Collaboration and engagement in a community of scholars is instrumental to research productivity, particularly among prolific scholars who sustain a focused commitment to scholarly research and writing over the course of many years (Austin & Baldwin, 1991). While many such collegial relationships are long-term and involve both a personal and professional relationship, there has been little acknowledgment in the research literature of the impact on research productivity of collaborative relationships among academics who share are married or who an intimate relationship and a household.

The 1997 publication of Academic Couples: Problems and Promises opened the door to the public discussion of the topic of faculty with a spouse or partner who is employed in higher education by providing the first widely available documentation of the extent of the presence of such couples on college and university campuses. Reflecting on the impact of the increase of the proportion of doctorates awarded to women in the last twenty -five years and the easing of anti nepotism policies at some institutions, findings from 1989-90 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) National Survey of College and University Faculty and Administrators, demonstrated that 35% of women faculty and 40% of men faculty have a partner who is also an academic (Astin & Milem, 1997).

Results from a national survey of senior faculty I conducted in the summer of 1997 suggest that formal and informal collaboration among spouse or partners in various aspects of scholarship is not uncommon. Using a sampling method intentionally designed to reach prolific scholarly writers, 750 senior faculty at a random sample of 22 public and private research institutions, matched by rank, department, and sex, were surveyed about collaboration, including with a spouse or partner in the research and publication process. Of the 263 respondents, including those never married, 64% had given or received feedback from a spouse or partner about a draft of a publication and 22% had co-authored at least one journal article, book, or monograph with a spouse or partner. There were no

statistically significant differences by sex in the percentage of respondents who had given or received feedback about a publication or who had co-authored a scholarly publication with a spouse.

There are numerous examples of historically prominent couples whose personal and professional lives are linked. Although easier to cite from among literary and artistic couples, such as Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf and Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, there are also prominent examples in scientific fields, such as Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in anthropology and Marie Curie and Pierre Curie in physics. While less common than other forms of scholarly collaboration, exploring the reciprocal impact of familial relationships on research productivity offers another way to explore the social and material conditions that contribute to creativity and scientific innovation and how they vary by gender.

Related Literature

The possibility that a spouse or partner may contribute to a women's publishing productivity has been raised, but not explored at any length in the empirical research literature. A number of authors have suggested the role of an academic spouse in explaining the finding that married women's productivity tends to be higher than single women's productivity by pointing to the role of a spouse in providing reinforcement and feedback (Astin & Davis, 1985; Kirsch, 1993); access to male mentors (Long, 1990); resources (Kyvik, 1990); the opportunity to be engaged in male dominated networks (Astin & Davis, 1985); and sharing with domestic responsibilities (Toren, 1991).

Consistent with the association of marriage and family responsibilities with women, the management of domestic responsibilities is probably the single reason put forward most consistently to explain the finding that both married men and married women produce more publications than their single counterparts. This is true even in more recent literature which might be expected to reflect the changing nature of family ideology, particularly among the highly educated. For instance, Bellas (1997) pointed to management of domestic

responsibilities to explain the finding in her research that the years a partner was not employed was positively associated with a composite measure of publishing productivity. She observed: "One possible explanation for this relationship is that nonemployed partner facilitates productivity indirectly, for example, by assuming the bulk of household responsibilities, or directly by providing research assistance."

Similar conclusions about handling domestic responsibilities as an explanation for the higher productivity levels of married faculty are offered in other cases. For instance, in some of the earliest research on the topic, Ferber and Huber (1979) concluded that while the men's education level had no impact on the women's productivity, being married to an equally educated lowered men's overall career productivity. Comparably educated women, they reasoned, were more likely than those who are less educated, to devote the majority of their time to their own careers, shifting some responsibilities traditionally assumed by women to men. Similarly, Astin and Milem (1997) concluded that while faculty women with an academic spouse were more productive than those with a nonacademic spouse, academic men with an academic spouse were less productive than those with a nonacademic spouse. They interpreted these findings by suggesting that men with nonacademic spouses may have benefited from reduced household responsibilities, clerical and research support and that women with academic spouses, but not necessarily men, may benefit because of access to information and networks. These explanations all seem to suggest that reciprocal benefits to productivity among academics with academic partners are unlikely and that the productivity of highly successful women publishers comes at the expense of the productivity of their partners.

One alternative hypothesis to those that explain the contribution of a partner to productivity as relating to how domestic responsibilities are handled, is the explanation that a spouse or partner, particularly one in the same academic field, may contribute to research productivity by providing invisible labor in the form of invisible labor, such as typing, editing, or data collection. It also comes in the traditionally female role of creating a home

environment that is conducive or supportive of the lifestyle required to sustain high levels of creative or intellectual output. The role of a spouse or partners, most typically the women, in providing invisible labor is illustrated in several books about the contribution of intimate partnerships to creative and scientific innovation, such as: Parallel Lives (1984), Mothering the Mind: Twelve Studies of Writers and Their Silent Partners (1984), Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives (1987) and Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnerships (1993).

Yet a third alternative hypothesis is the among those who are comparably educated, a partner may contribute to scholarly productivity directly by sharing in the labor of scholarship (Creamer, 1996). The labor of scholarship may contain both reinforcement and resources; two factors associated with sustaining publishing productivity. Fox (1983) distinguished between these two when she observed that reinforcement is **why** scientists continue to produce and that resources are **how** they are able to sustain productivity (p. 296). Resources are the physical and personnel resources required to conduct research, while reinforcement occurs both in the form of formal recognition from colleagues through awards and citations and through informal feedback about ideas. Differences in access to resources and in the processes of reinforcement have been offered as an explanation for why so few women are prolific writers (Long & Fox, 1995; Ward & Grant, 1996). Academic partners who share an interest in research may contribute to productivity by providing resources, such as the efficiencies that occur from sharing the labor and knowledge, and reinforcement that occurs with frequent and on-going access to substantive feedback about ideas.

Method

Sample

Twenty-seven academics who had co-authored at least one scholarly publication with a spouse or partner participated in this research project. This included 10 pairs where both members were interviewed and an additional 7 where only one member of the pair

was interviewed, representing a total of 17 collaborative pairs. Of these 17, 10 women and 7 men were labeled as the primary participant either because they were the first one interviewed or because they were the only one of the pair interviewed. Both members of a pair were not interviewed for one of two reasons: either one of the partners was not available for interviewing or, secondly, the collaborative relationships described was so narrowly defined that it did not seem productive to do so.

Participants were identified in one of two ways. Fourteen of the 17 primary participants responded to a national survey of a matched sample of senior faculty at 22 research institutions about scholarly collaboration, including among spouses or partners, conducted by the author in the summer of 1996 and indicated that they would be willing to participate in a telephone interview. The remaining three primary participants were identified through a snowball sampling technique.

The 17 primary participants share the following characteristics: each is a tenured faculty member who has achieved the rank of associate or full professor and each meets the definition of being a prolific scholarly writer by virtue of having published 21 or more journal articles or five or more books over the course of his or her career. Additional descriptive information about the primary participants appears in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Data Collection

Interviews. I conducted semi-structured, individual, telephone interviews with each participant. Participants were asked to (a) describe the nature and extent of their collaboration with a partner, (b) to assess how he or she felt it had contributed to their overall career productivity, (c) to compare it to other types of collaborative relationships with colleagues, and (d) to describe how a typical project was accomplished. Interviews were tape recorded and a verbatim transcript completed.

Curriculum vita. Each participant supplied a copy of an up-to-date curriculum vita with their publication record. I used the curriculum vita to collect information about each of the following about the primary participant: disciplinary affiliation, year of completion of the doctoral degree, academic rank, total number of career publications, and year and number of co-authored publications.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was accomplished largely through using a constant comparative approach. Transcripts were first coded by hand for emerging themes. Once codes had been identified, the transcripts were then coded a second time and entered into the qualitative software called NUDIST. The software allowed for ease of sorting and retrieving data, as well as allowed for the merger or separation of codes as they emerged during the process of analysis.

Findings

Descriptive Information About the Participants

Although sharing the demographic characteristics of prolific scholarly writers, the collaborative couples participating in this research project differ in some remarkable ways from the majority of faculty. It should not be assumed that they are representative of faculty at large, any more than any sample of prolific scholarly writers is representative of faculty at large.

Training. As shown in Table 1, primary participants completed doctorates in a variety of academic disciplines, including biological natural sciences, education, humanities, physical sciences, and social sciences. However, more than two-thirds of the primary participants are in disciplines in the social science, such as sociology and psychology, which are not disciplines traditionally known to have highest collaboration rates (Becher, 1989).

Almost all of the primary participants reported that they and their partner completed doctoral degrees in the same disciplinary areas. Most reported that they met and began collaborating together while one or both of them were completing their doctorates.

Publishing productivity. Table 2 is used to present information about the publishing level of primary participants, as well as about the proportion of total articles co-authored with a spouse or partner.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Career stages. Sharing qualities characteristic of prolific scholarly writers, all of the primary participants currently hold senior, tenured faculty appointments and almost all are employed on the faculty at research institutions.

One unexpected finding is the number of partners with comparable career paths. A pair was considered to have a comparable career path if they met each of the following four conditions: (a) there was five years or less difference between the years they earned a doctorate; (b) both are full-time, tenured faculty members, (c) both are at the same academic rank, and (d) they are both employed at research universities. Contrary to the stereotypical portrait of a junior-senior relationship, 10 of the 17 couples had comparable career paths. When compared to the men in the sample, more women had a partner who was not in a comparable position.

Patterns of Collaboration

The terms adjunct, complementary, and interchangeable have been used in the literature to describe the roles adopted by members of a couple in creative and scholarly collaboration. These terms, however, proved unworkable for this sample of senior scholars who had been involved in formal collaborations with a spouse or partner that resulted in a scholarly publication, such as a journal articles, book, or book chapter. They were unworkable because they failed to capture how the collaborative relationship changed over

time or with the nature and topic of the project. When asked how accurately any one of these labels was in describing how they accomplished their joint projects, many participants, particularly those who had collaborated together for a number of years, replied that they had used all of the patterns at one time or other and that the roles they assumed varied by the project.

Using information supplied during a personal interview and the publications listed on the participant's vita, I developed the labels short term, intermittent, and long term to describe the patterns of formal collaboration among academic partners. These terms describe three key elements of these collaborations. The first is the duration of the collaboration or the number of years it spans. The second is the frequency or the amount of publications that were co-authored. The third is the amount of skill or topic overlap or distinction among the partners. While all of the patterns of collaboration were associated with level of publication productivity, the distinction among patterns is most helpful in understanding the types of collaborative relationships that were most clearly perceived to be associated with theory building.

Table 3 is used to summarize the major elements of each of the three patterns. These are described in greater detail in the following section.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Short Term

Seven of the 17 primary participants described a collaborative relationship with a partner that was characterized as short term. While informal collaboration, such as feedback about drafts of articles, was generally described as on-going and very valuable, participants in this kind of collaborative relationship described a working with a spouse or partner one-time, for a single project where their research areas temporarily intersected. In most cases, these collaborations occurred relatively early in one or both of their careers.

Participants in this kind of relationship played clearly discernible roles in the project or supplied a highly specialized skill that was instrumental at that stage in the development of a project.

Such collaborations were frequently the product of opportunity afforded by co-habitation and their personal relationship. This was the case, for instance, among several couples who spent a fairly extended period of time together in a geographically isolated situation, such as was afforded by a fellowship or leave of absence in another country. In such situations, partners often took advantage of a specialized skill offered by a partner, such as knowledge of the language or culture of the region. On several cases, the partners in this type of relationship chose not to continue working together as co-authors because they did not find it workable.

Participants who described this type of relationship were least likely to say the collaboration had a significant impact on their productivity. As one participant described it, "our period of writing together was roughly short in the big scheme of things." Participants often described the contribution of such collaborative partnerships to productivity in very pragmatic ways and found little to distinguish between a collaborative relationship with a partner than a collaborative relationship with a colleague. For instance, a participant who described both herself and her spouse as being neuroscientists, found very little to say about her collaborative relationship with her spouse, observing that she was a phase in her research when it was "useful" for her to use some of the technique he used. She described the collaboration as "fortuitous," and no different from any other collaborative relationship where she has a skill, her collaborator has a skill, and they put it together "to do something different."

Another participant, a male, full professor in sociology, captured this type of collaborative relationship and how it contributes to productivity in the following words:

> Over the years it has just worked out as a matter of efficiency. The data analysis thing is almost like the writing thing. That by working on it in a concentrated way,

you make advances you wouldn't make otherwise. You begin to look at things would not see otherwise. there is an advantage to concentrating your effort in one arena and dividing it up into bits and pieces.

Intermittent

Three of 17 primary participants described a collaborative relationship with a partner that was characterized as intermittent. That is, they collaborated with a spouse or partner to produce scholarly publications on more than one project, but that there were gaps of more than five years between those collaborations. Such participants generally had at least one topic area where they shared an on-going, common interest, but for a number of reasons chose not to pursue this area for a fairly long period of time.

Although the small number of couples describing this pattern of collaboration limits what can be said, issues of recognition seemed to played a major role in the decision of at least one member of each of these couple to suspend collaboration. Rather than having an unpleasant experience collaborating together, couples whose collaborative relationship was grouped in this pattern pointed to internal or external pressure to establish scholarly identities distinct from each other as one of the reasons that they suspended their collaboration. For instance, one participant, now a full professor in education, observed that their collaboration came to a "screeching halt" after her third year review when she was told that she had published too many articles with senior people. Another woman, now a full professor in sociology, observed that she chose to move away from the academic area where both she and her spouse shared an interest because she wanted "to be in a different domain." The drive to differentiate from a partner by establishing clearly distinct lines of scholarly inquiry was one described by a number of participants.

Unlike the academic partners classified in the short term pattern, several of those classified as intermittent reported planning to resume their formal collaborative relationship with a spouse because they now felt their reputation as a scholar was secure enough to do so.

Long Term

Seven of 17 primary participants described a collaborative relationship with a partner that can be described as long term. All of the participants in this category maintained a fairly consistent level of scholarly publishing with a partner that extended over ten or more years, without significant gaps in publication of five or more years. Participants in this category were most likely to describe sustaining over time a mutual line of scholarship with a partner on a topic where their two, closely allied, but distinct areas of scholarship intersected.

Participants in this kind of relationship generally had very similar disciplinary training and career paths. They were often extremely detailed in their delineation's of the demarcation between their distinct research agendas and where they overlapped. A male geologist whose spouse is a full a professor in geology, provides a clear example of how a pair might work together at the intersections of their distinct areas of expertise when he described the intersections their areas of expertise which are associated with different parts of the country in the following words:

> She is more involved with the hard rocks, rocks with a particular composition type and I have been trained with sedimentary and metamorphous rocks...One area we have been working is in California where both of these rocks of being studied. They are actually flushed up against each other and it is an area that we both can work on our different types of problems.

The relationship between these types of long term collaborative relationships and the potential for the production of new knowledge was most clearly articulated by members of this group. Like members of the other types of partnerships, they pointed to the advantage afforded by ease and speed of access to substantive feedback about ideas. In addition, members of this group tended to observe about the contribution to the quality of their work of multiple, iterative conversations occurring informally and over long periods of time. For instance, a female full professor in psychology noted:

> We have actually over the years, developed a couple of basic theoretical models that have been pretty widely picked up. I think of that as creative work or at least it comes out of the literature. We didn't make it up whole cloth. That kind of thing...you don't just sit down and say, okay, I am going to come up with a theory. It develops out of multiple conversations over periods of years and through the process of writing.

The relationship between long-term collaborative relationships and theory building reported by some participants in long-term collaborative relationships with a partner are particularly exceptional in that collaboration in scholarly research is more common when theory testing than theory building (Austin & Baldwin, 1991).

When compared to participants whose collaborative relationships with a partner were described as short term or intermittent, members of this group were most likely to characterize their collaborative relationship with a partner has having some qualities that differed from other types of collaborative relationships which they also maintained. For instance, the partner to the faculty member just quoted, also a full professor in psychology, observed the following:

> The other factor, I suppose, is our other emotional attachment means that maybe we care more about the collaboration being successful. We are willing to fight it through to the successful resolution whereas with other cases...with another collaborator, if we couldn't agree, we would find a compromise or trade off...we'll do this part my way and this part your way rather than insisting on thinking hard enough to find the way to make it mesh. I suspect that might be part of the reason why I think that the works she and I have done has been amongst our best work.

Conclusions

Conceptual Explanation-Domestic Economies

Contrary to the explanations often put forward in the research literature, when asked how a partner contributed to their research productivity, not a single participant in

this research project replied with detailed information about the contribution of a spouse to childcare or household management. The single, nearly uniform reply to this question was the advantage afforded by ease of access to informal feedback about work in progress.

Informal feedback is an element of reinforcement that is critical to explaining why scholars continue to produce (Fox, 1983) and part of what I have labeled as the domestic economy of collaboration among academics who share a household. While they share many characteristics with other types of collaborative relationships, the central hypothesis I am proposing is that these partnerships contribute to productivity primarily through the intimacy of cohabiting the site of production. Central to this is the vital role played by on-going and long-term access to informal feedback about ideas. This is a form of intellectual capital facilitated by the resources afforded by shared space and time and the reciprocal benefits of the efficiencies gained by division of the labor of scholarly research.

As might be expected of a group of people who have published enough to be considered prolific scholarly writers, virtually all participants described engagement in many collaborative relationships in addition to the one with their spouse or partner, including with graduate students. The topic of research conducted with a spouse or partner was generally considered to be a secondary or tertiary line of research and was usually only one of several lines of research that they maintained. Part of the explanation that prolific scholars are more likely to collaborate with a partner than their colleagues who have devoted less time to scholarly writing is probably the very simple reason that prolific scholarly writers collaborate more often than other researchers.

The impact on publishing productivity of this type of relationship varied by the pattern of co-authorship. Those describing what were labeled as short term or intermittent relationships were unlikely to report that their overall career productivity had been substantially effected by a collaborative relationship with a partner. They were also unlikely to see much difference between this type of collaborative relationship and any other type of collaborative relationship with a colleague. Participants describing relationships categorized

as long term were most likely to view these relationships as impacting either the quality or quantity of their publication or both. Although not all participants said they enjoyed writing, they all enjoyed research or problem solving. The majority of respondents observed that they knew that a faculty role at a research institution involved scholarly research and publication and if they had not collaborated with a spouse or partner they probably would have collaborated with someone else.

Almost all participants spoke at length about the impact of the institutional reward structure on their collaborative relationship with a spouse. Both men and women reported receiving blunt messages from academic administrators at their institutions about the importance of developing an independent scholarly record. Both men and women described the experience of being challenged during the process of merit reviews to identify what role each had played in the papers they had co-authored with a spouse. A number described a climate more friendly to couples as a reasons for relocating to another research institution. There is no doubt that the institutional reward structure at most universities is a mitigating factor in suppressing the impact on productivity of collaboration among academic spouses and partners.

The collaborative patterns observed among the pairs of academics in this sample differ in from what might be expected from a representative sample of faculty. Patterns of collaboration are strongly related to the academic discipline and the nature of problem addressed. That more than two-thirds of the sample of primary participants earned doctorates in education or social sciences differs from overall collaboration rates which are generally lower in the social sciences than in many fields in the so-called "hard" sciences with well developed theoretical paradigms (Bayer & Smart, 1991) . It also does not totally reflect the proportion of academics with academic partners by field reported by Astin and Milem (1997). An important part of the explanation lies in differences in collaboration rates among subdisciplines. For instance, some of the participants classified as social scientists because of their doctoral degree, actually consider themselves to be biological or physical

scientists because of the focus of their research. Another is that the lower than would be expected representation of collaborative couples in the biological and physical sciences in the sample may be explained by disciplinary conventions where the man is most likely to be hired in a faculty position while a comparably educated spouse is generally hired as the head post-doctoral fellow or research associate. This underscores the influence of disciplinary conventions and institutional policies in fully understanding the context of formal collaboration among academic partners.

Collaborating with a spouse or partner is only one of many factors associated with productivity and which combine to shape a prolific scholar. There are a number of related areas open for further research. One is to examine the institutional culture at universities identified by members of this sample as being "couple friendly." Another is to explore in detail the impact of the institutional reward structure and the potential of couples to subvert it. A third is to explore the distinctions among patterns of formal and informal collaboration among academic partners and how the impact of such relationships may vary by gender in future research.

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Table 1: Descriptive Information About Primary Participants Who Have Co-Authored With a Partner (N=17)

Characteristic	Women # (%) (n=9)	Men #(%) (n=8)
Academic Rank		
Associate		1(13%)
Full	9(100%)	7(88%)
Academic Discipline		
Bio. & Physical Sciences	3(33%)	
Education	1(11%)	2(26%)
Humanities	2(22%)	
Social Sciences	3(33%)	6(75%)
Partner With Same Disciplinary Affiliation		
Yes	8(89%)	7(88%)
No	1(11%)	1(13%)
Partner's Position		
Faculty	5(63%)	7(88%)
Other-Higher Education	2(22%)	1(13%)
Not Higher Education	2(22%)	

Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2: Publishing Productivity of Primary Participants Who Have Co-Authored With a Partner (N=17)

Characteristic	Women # (%) (n=9)	Men #(%) (n=8)
Year Earned Doctorate		
Before 1960	1(11%)	
1961-1969		3(37%)
1970-1979	6(67%)	4(50%)
1980-1985	2(22%)	1(13%)
Career Journal Article Productivity		
Less than 21		1(13%)
21 to 50	4(44%)	4(50%)
More than 50	5(56%)	3(37%)
Number of Articles Co-Authored With Partner		
None	2(22%)	1(13%)
1-4	5(56%)	4(50%)
5-10		1(13%)
11-20		1(13%)
21 or More	2(22%)	1(13%)
Number of Books Co-Authored With Partner		
None	5(56%)	5(63%)
1 or More	4(44%)	3(37%)

Table 3: Patterns Of Co-Authorship With a Partner Among Prolific Academics (N=17)

Name	Characteristic			
(n)	Duration (Yrs)	Frequency	Career Paths	Topic
Short Term (n=7)	5	One-Time	Not necessarily parallel	Temporary intersection.
Intermittent (n=3)	Gaps of 5 or more years.	More than once	Usually parallel	Interests diverged.
Long Term (n=7)	10	Consistent over time	Parallel	Interests intersect repeatedly.